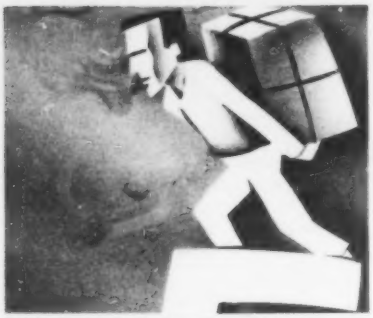

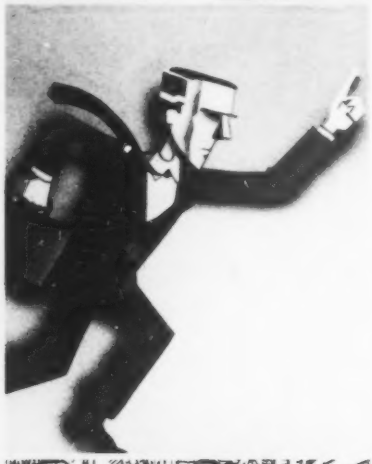

Phi Delta KAPPAN

February 1991 • Volume 72 • Number 6

FEATURES

424 **A New Federal Law on Vocational Education: Will Reform Follow?,** *by John G. Wirt*

434 **The Walls Come Down: The Overdue Reunification of Vocational and Academic Education,** *by Larry Rosenstock*

437 **Vocational Education in High School: A Modern Phoenix?,** *by Kenneth Gray*

446 **The New Limits to Growth: Economic Transformation and Vocational Education,** *by Roger J. Vaughan*

450 **Education Reform and Relationships Between the Private Sector and Education: A Call for Integration,** *by Kenneth Hoyt*

453 **Integrated Learning for a Competitive Work Force,** *by Rosemary F. Kolde*

456 **The Place of Industrial Arts in the Academic Community,** *by Lynn Rannels*

458 **Linking Restructuring to Authentic Student Achievement,** *by Fred M. Newmann*

464 **Suppositional Style and Teacher Evaluation,** *by Joseph O. Milner*

468 **Observations,** *by Jane Juska*

471 **A Better Model for Residential High Schools for Talented Youths,** *by Julian C. Stanley*

DEPARTMENTS

419 **THE EDITOR'S PAGE,** Merchants in the Temple

420 **WASHINGTON COMMENTARY,** *by Anne C. Lewis*

422 **STATELINE,** *by Chris Pipho*

474 **PEER,** An Interview with David Carter, *by Deborah Burnett Strother*

478 **DE JURE,** Another Lesson in Academic Freedom, *by Perry A. Zirkel*

482 **IN CANADA,** Canadians Speak Out on Education, *by Tom McConaghy*

484 **BACKTALK**

Cover Illustration: Ned Shaw

Merchants in the Temple

WHEN HIGH school students in Fargo, North Dakota, walked out of their homerooms in protest rather than watch another Channel One broadcast, they weren't objecting to the advertising that comes with Whittle Communication's package deal. No, they were unhappy with the content of the program. Too immature for 11th- and 12th-graders, they charged.

More power to these discriminating consumers. They've already learned what might be the most significant lesson of the Whittle broadcasts: they exercised their ultimate power as consumers; they chose not to buy the product offered for sale.

Perhaps writing these words just before Christmas, while my two daughters are being dunned incessantly by commercial advertising, explains why the action of these North Dakota students cheers me so. The nation's advertisers know that children and teenagers now make or influence purchases estimated to reach a billion dollars a week. In so vast a marketplace Whittle's two minutes a day amount to small potatoes.

Our children are beset by advertising. It has escaped the confines of the 90-second slots that punctuate Saturday morning TV. In some cases, the TV programming itself amounts to little more than a 30-minute sales pitch. I won't repeat the litany of children's characters that began life as products and only later became the subjects of some pretty bland stories. Scan the listings some Saturday – or force yourself to actually watch the shows. With the exception of the Disney Channel's "Mother Goose Stories," produced by the late Jim Henson, I doubt that you'll find much that's worthwhile – or anything not shot through with some form of advertising.

Of course, my generation faced advertising too. I had a Davy Crockett cup and plate. But the intensity of the sales pitch was a great deal lower then. Today, my daughters know that Paula Abdul no longer wears Reebok sneakers. She's switched her allegiance to L.A. Gear. They know that Michael J. Fox is a big fan of Pepsi products, both from his commercials and from the *Back to the Future* films. But they also know that Abdul and Fox are paid for their product endorsements and that the producers of Fox's films were paid as well. Their mother and I have made it a point to share with them a general skepticism about advertisements, both print and broadcast.

And for Mandy, the older, I've recently discovered a valuable new resource in our continuing struggle to arm the girls against slick sales tactics – a magazine for kids that they will really read, enjoy, and learn from. I'm referring to *Zillions*, a new bimonthly magazine from the Consumers Union, the folks who for years have brought adults the straight dope about products in *Consumer Reports*. *Zillions* includes regular features with such titles as "Sneaky Sell," "You Test It," and "Money Talk." Each issue also features product reviews conducted by kids themselves of such items as books, CDs, and magazines.

I would say that *Zillions* is appropriate for most upper-elementary students and middle-schoolers. Each issue could be the centerpiece of a top-notch lesson in consumer education. Mandy wants to replicate a study, reported in the December 1990/January 1991 issue, of Bounty paper towels' claim to be the quicker-picker-upper.

Whatever the final verdict on Channel One, advertising is a fact of modern life, and the minions of Mammon have entered the temple of education. Advertising is already in the schools in newspapers and magazines, in glitzy ad-bearing posters, on the clothing that some children wear, and in giveaway programs sponsored by corporations. Some of the programs and products are good; some are not. We owe it to our children to help them tell the difference. – BMS

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Suppositional Style and Teacher Evaluation

Mr. Milner provides some data to buttress his assertion that, in using superficial evaluation models for teachers, we may never achieve the crucial integration of subject knowledge and pedagogy.

BY JOSEPH O. MILNER

WHEN JEROME Bruner looks back at his early education, in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, he remembers fondly those teachers who did not present knowledge as a given set of facts but who let him draw his own conclusions and have a sense that he and his classmates created that knowledge for themselves.[1] One wonders how Bruner's favorite teachers would have been evaluated, using the growing number of state-adopted instruments for evaluating teachers.

Although many states adopted teacher evaluation instruments with great confidence in their ability to define and promote teaching excellence, a chorus of critical voices quickly arose to challenge the validity of these instruments. When educators looked closely at the underlying research base, they found it to be centered on grades 1 through 3 – a serious shortcoming for instruments that were to be used across 13 grade levels.[2]

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Illustration by Stephanie Taugner

Developmental educators, who believe that both teaching and learning styles should match the cognitive stages of students, found this narrow focus on the primary grades particularly troublesome. In addition, the research was found to focus almost exclusively on instruction in math and other subjects in which simple answers, rather than more complex explanations, were sought.[3] Furthermore, critics question instruments that are based on a combination of disparate studies whose designs were varied and whose basic concepts were not equivalent.

More important even than these criticisms of their construct validity was the obvious failure of the instruments to evaluate the dynamic interplay between content knowledge and teaching method. Educators complained that the classroom teacher could be spouting gibberish while using the correct procedure and still earn high performance ratings. Conversely, a teacher could be exploring a subtle concept in a remarkable fashion – but not in a manner or sequence prescribed by the instrument – and be marked down for it. An "objective" instrument cannot measure the "subjective" dimension of a classroom – that dimension which gives teaching its creative force.

Teachers generally feel that mandates from national, state, and local authorities undermine rather than promote high-quality education. But what is particularly insidious about the entire process of evaluation is that it stems from a top-down mindset that views teachers as children and threatens their growing sense of professionalism. Rather than being encouraged to solidify more enriching and skillful approaches to teaching, teachers are forced to adopt restrictive and trivialized techniques for the evaluation procedure.

A variety of teacher educators, some of whom are leaders in the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, have spoken out against the teacher evaluation models that are surfacing across the country. The charges have been numerous, but three are repeated most often. The first objection is directed at the monistic nature of the instruments. In a university world that thrives on pluralism, the fact that one model would be the *only* model for evaluating teaching is very hard to accept. The contest of ideas is a basic principle of education; thus proclaiming one procedure as the sole procedure seems thoroughly anti-intellectual. Teaching cannot and should not be standardized.

University educators also regard the models as flatly mechanistic. The models equate good teaching with simple behaviors and recommend that those behaviors be rewarded. Some educators are willing to acknowledge that such instru-

ments may work well in setting minimal standards for beginning teachers, but they stress that the models should never be the templates by which the excellence of experienced teachers is measured.[4]

A final misgiving among teacher educators is their sense that teacher evaluation instruments will in fact come to dictate the training for new teachers. In such an event, multiplicity, pluralism, and real education will be supplanted by mere apprentice training. Teacher educators argue that the education of teachers should expose them to a wide range of ideas and styles. Prospective teachers should consider what ought to be the case rather than be socialized and trained to what is the case in a certain school district. To view teacher education as the inculcation of narrow and trivialized skills is to court serious long-range problems in the schools.

Respected learning theorists and leaders of education foundations and study groups have elaborated these strong reservations. Vito Perrone of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is concerned that the humanistic dimension of teaching has been ignored in favor of a mechanical, quasi-scientific approach. He has spoken eloquently for teaching as an art: not a brisk, productive exercise built on strict plans and algorithms, as the evaluation models suppose, but a painstaking process filled with nuance and improvisation.[5] Phillip Jackson, a critic who knows schools and teaching well, praises the humanistic, artistic core of teaching and speculates that those who boast of a strict science of teaching are merely masking their own uncertainties about the field.[6] Sara Lawrence Lightfoot expresses much the same view. In *The Good High School* she portrays excellent teachers who bob and weave through complex concepts and intriguing topics in ways that would be rated poorly by evaluators strictly observing effective teaching behaviors.[7]

Some concerned researchers are working to devise new instruments. Among those who have expressed dissatisfaction with the failure to tie the instruments to "content competency" are Lee Shulman and Gary Sykes, who have developed a portfolio model that works carefully at the intersection of content knowledge and sophisticated pedagogy.[8] The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is developing new, refined evaluative models based largely on the work of Shulman and Sykes. The Educational Testing Service is also involved in designing a new kind of performance-oriented evaluation instrument that makes content a significant part of the assessment process.

ADOPTION OF TEACHER EVALUATION MODELS

In spite of strong opposition from many quarters, the education reform movements in many states eagerly appropriated the available teacher evaluation procedures. The recent educational history of North Carolina, my home state, illustrates the "fit" of these interlocking forces. The structure for applying such instruments existed in North Carolina because a more rigorous means of certification had been instituted in 1985, whereby beginning teachers were not fully certified but entered into a supervised apprenticeship. This induction period was designed to guide beginning teachers more surely into the profession under the care of mentors. It was a perfect fit: the initial certification program used the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI) as a means of assessing the teaching competency of first-year teachers.[9] Some educators complained, but others felt that the tool could be used to assess the rudimentary skills that every beginning teacher should possess. Moreover, the new teachers had little or no power with which to make their misgivings felt.

A concurrent movement toward greater professionalization in teaching prompted state legislators and local education systems to develop career ladder programs for all public school teachers in North Carolina. These programs, of course, needed an objective measure of teaching excellence; thus was a new and extended use of the TPAI instituted. In North Carolina, career ladders and the TPAI were wed in pilot projects across the state. Large numbers of teachers who had progressed far beyond the induction period were brought into this process and put under the gun of the new evaluation procedure. They complained, but the marriage was not annulled.

The school systems that were selected as pilot sites were tied to the TPAI in two dramatic ways. First, the state had endorsed a 30-hour videotape that was used in training sessions across North Carolina to help teachers better understand the basic principles of the TPAI and assimilate its behaviors into their teaching repertoires. The local trainers, of course, could not be indifferent to the process and naturally took on the role of apologists for the teaching model. Second, principals and other administrators were required to spend hours conducting evaluations with the instrument, so they were naturally identified with the model as well and found themselves explaining and defending the approach in their schools. Thus staff development people in superintendents' offices and school-level administrators almost unwittingly became allies and advocates for the new means of assessing classroom teachers. The introduction of the TPAI into North Carolina schools has had a profound effect. Teachers in two large school districts where the instrument was being pilot tested registered an overwhelmingly negative response to the use of the instrument and to the total procedure for evaluation.[10]

In North Carolina, career ladders and the TPAI were wed in pilot projects across the state.

BUILDING A SUPPOSITIONAL EVALUATION MODEL

My original misgivings about teacher evaluation were thus intensified by my

observation of its consequences in North Carolina, and I felt it was important to try to investigate the impact of the TPAI on teaching style in the classroom. I was sure that, just as tests drive the curriculum, this test would drive teaching. I knew that teachers were eluding the evaluators with passive resistance and dummy lessons, but I feared that the instrument would have a long-term effect.

I was uncertain how I might examine the effect of the TPAI. I knew of Anne Dyson's ethnographic study validating off-task behavior in the elementary classroom,[11] but I wanted to approach the issue of epistemology and teacher performance quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Moreover, I knew the importance of articulating my research in language that would have meaning for those who make strategic decisions about the direction of teaching.

As I looked at the TPAI more closely, I remembered Jerome Bruner's two kinds of teachers, and a plan took shape. Bruner contrasts two styles of teaching: an "old-science" pedagogy, which views teaching as "surgery, suppression, replacement, deficit filling," and a new style that "renders the world less fixed, . . . more susceptible to re-creation."[12] Bruner draws on the classroom investigations of others to delineate these two contrasting styles, two different classroom environments, and two variant uses of language by teachers. The divergence of language suggests that these teachers have very different constructions of reality, knowledge, and learning and that they encourage very different responses from students. Bruner describes the response elicited by his own teacher, Miss Orcutt, who, by simple statement of wonder at the change of water from a liquid to a solid, invited the 10-year-old student to "extend my world of wonder to encompass hers. She was not just informing me! She was, rather, negotiating the world of wonder and possibility. Molecules, solids, liquids, movement were not facts; they were to be used in pondering and imagining. Miss Orcutt was the rarity. She was a human event, not a transmission device."[13]

With this understanding of Bruner's contrasting styles and my own hopes for my state, I stepped into the evaluators' world and created an instrument that was the obverse of the TPAI. I called the two pedagogical styles that I wished to compare the *suppositional* style (based on supposing, conjecturing) and the *propositional* style (based on proposing, putting forth, informing). The TPAI is essentially a measure of propositional teaching. I defined the suppositional world in behavioral terms, as best I could, so that I could measure its presence in the classroom. The seven-item list below is the heart of the evaluation instrument I created.

1. The teacher uses words of supposition, such as "perhaps," "maybe," "then again," "one wonders," "inexplicably," "might," and "possibly" in his or her discourse.

2. The teacher starts one explanation and then suggests a better, more complete explanation.

3. The teacher begins an activity in one way and then suggests a better way to proceed.

4. The teacher actively encourages students to question propositions and theses developed by the teacher and by the other students.

5. The teacher invites students to challenge concepts stated in texts, statements made by authorities, and notions accepted by the general populace.

6. The teacher actively encourages risky, whimsical, hypothetical, questionable statements by the students.

7. The teacher makes it clear that knowledge is uncertain, that "facts" can change.

Having developed these seven indicators of suppositional teaching style, I selected 10 of the most significant indices from the TPAI:

1. The teacher asks questions and assigns tasks that students handle with a high rate of success.

2. The teacher begins the lesson with a review of previous material.

3. The teacher introduces the lesson or instructional activity.

4. The teacher summarizes the main point(s) of the lesson at the end of the lesson.

5. The teacher presents the lesson using vocabulary and a level of complexity understandable to the students.

6. The teacher provides relevant examples and demonstrations to illustrate concepts and skills.

7. The teacher conducts the lesson at a brisk pace, responding to student questions and comments quickly and slowing presentations only when necessary for student understanding.

8. The teacher regularly assesses student performance by asking all students for written or oral answers.

9. The teacher provides students with immediate feedback on the correctness or incorrectness of in-class work.

10. The teacher affirms a correct oral answer quickly, even tacitly.

I tried to make the language and form of the suppositional indicators as similar as possible to that of their TPAI counterparts. Having moved that far into the empirical world, I developed a full-fledged instrument and created a simple research design in which to use it.

In order to gather data, I enlisted the aid of college students who were prospective teachers and who were observing local K-12 classes as a part of their introductory coursework. They were asked to measure the strength of each of the teacher behaviors on a four-point Likert scale: strong evidence of this behavior, some evidence of this behavior, little evidence of this behavior, or no evidence of this behavior.

I wanted the evaluators to be as unobtrusive and nonthreatening as possible and thus asked the cooperating teachers for permission to let the students "make observations that will help corroborate some of Jerome Bruner's latest instructional ideas." Because I made it clear that I was interested in group results and would retrieve no information that would identify individual teachers, I encountered no reluctance to participate in the project. A group of about 50 K-12 teachers allowed their classrooms to be used as the laboratory in which we could determine how the adoption or reinforcement of a propositional style might affect a suppositional style where and if it existed.

The student observers were given simple directions for a set of six one-hour observations in which they would alternately use the form listing propositional behaviors and the form listing suppositional behaviors. The observers were asked to look over the forms carefully to be sure that each item was clear to them, but they were not "trained" or measured for interrater reliability. Because the observers were unfamiliar with the state-adopted TPAI, they could be reasonably

objective. They were not given a bias toward one style or the other or told how either related to state practices.

The study was designed to begin the same year as the TPAI pilot projects and to continue for three years. My goal was to see what cumulative effect the evaluation instrument would have on the use of the two styles.

SIMPLE ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The results of this study were startling. Table 1 shows the simple results of more than 300 hours of observation, giving us a clear picture of the effect of the TPAI on propositional and suppositional styles.

From the beginning of the study, the presence of the propositional style was seen to be strong: during the first year (1985-86), nearly 80% of the observers' evaluations on the 10-item instrument recorded strong evidence or some evidence of this style. By the third year, however, more than 95% of the observers' evaluations fell into these categories – a higher percentage than even the creators and supporters of the TPAI could have expected. These findings suggest a thorough adoption of the propositional style.

If the data on suppositional style are considered in the same global fashion, the results are inverted. The suppositional style was not as strong from the start as the propositional style: slightly less than 40% of the evaluations recorded strong or some evidence of suppositional style. The striking and troubling progression of the data demonstrates that, from this already low point, the deterioration of the suppositional style was swift and sure. Each year, evidence of the suppositional style decreased by about 50%, until it reached a negligible level of only 11.01% at the end of three years. Looking at the results in this global fashion may deprive us of some more sophisticated analyses of the data, but these simple numbers record a vivid truth. The propositional style was mastered by the teachers, and the suppositional style was all but eradicated. The test built the pedagogy. A style that once had some life in the observed classrooms was vanquished, driven out.

What should be done? I do not propose that we establish the suppositional style by persuading administrators across the state and the nation to evaluate teachers using my seven-item instrument – or even a more refined, research-based rendition of it. One straitjacket should not be replaced by another. However, I fear that, in using superficial evaluation models, we may never achieve the crucial integration of subject knowledge and pedagogy. I fear, too, that – in what could be a time of promise, as we strive to attract superior students to the teaching profession – we will drive superior students away with these models. Finally, I fear that these models undermine our profession's most basic hope: that teachers, above all other professionals, be humane, not mundane.

TABLE 1.
Summary of Propositional and Suppositional Teaching Behaviors

INSTANCES OF TARGET BEHAVIORS

	Propositional				Suppositional			
	Strong	Some	Little	None	Strong	Some	Little	None
1985-86	230	154	75	21	67	66	70	133
1986-87	278	169	56	37	36	39	99	204
1987-88	330	133	13	4	20	17	101	198

PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL INSTANCES

	Propositional				Suppositional			
	Strong	Some	Little	None	Strong	Some	Little	None
1985-86	47.92	32.07	15.63	4.38	19.94	19.64	20.84	39.58
1986-87	51.48	31.30	10.37	6.85	9.52	10.32	26.57	53.59
1987-88	68.75	27.71	2.71	0.83	5.95	5.06	30.06	58.93

GLOBAL PERCENTAGES

	Propositional		Suppositional	
	Strong/Some	Little/None	Strong/Some	Little/None
1985-86	79.99	20.01	39.58	60.42
1986-87	82.78	17.22	19.84	80.16
1987-88	96.46	3.54	11.01	88.99

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2. Linda Darling-Hammond, "The Futures of Teaching," *Educational Leadership*, November 1986, pp. 4-10.
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12. Bruner, pp. 124, 159.
13. Ibid., p. 126. K